

DFT Pushes for Building Reps at Every School

About 50 DFT members attended a Building Representative training Feb. 10 to strengthen the fight at the building level to improve education in Detroit.

Shanta Driver, a labor lawyer and former teacher, led the event. Teachers had the opportunity to discuss issues they are facing in their schools.



Shanta Driver

"I'm excited about this training," Driver said. "This is the beginning of the rebirth of the DFT."

Driver discussed the DFT's current contract.

"The number one problem is not how bad the contract is, it's how little what's in the contract is enforced," she said.

"In almost every school there's a violation of prep periods," she said. "There are worthless and endless lectures by the principals. And prep periods are absorbed by having to cover for teachers who are absent."

Although tenure laws recently were changed, Driver said teachers still have rights.

"You're led to believe you have no protection under those tenure laws, I



beg to differ," she said. "A lot of it turns on whether the district followed the teacher tenure law."

Members talked about assaults they have been under, many by their own principal. They called out schools that are severely mismanaged without redress.

One building rep said she had been retaliated against by her principal, stopped from attending workshops or working summer school, after driving out the previous building rep.

Nicole Conaway, a teacher at East English Village, said a Spanish teacher in her school had just received her books for the year that morning.

"She had been teaching all year

without books."

Driver said one idea is to create a bad principal list. She said members need to join with the community and go on the offensive with the emergency manager, administrators and principals.

If we don't, DFT President Steve Conn said, we continue to endure mismanagement, including schools that are cold or typically closed for more days during a snow storm than surrounding districts.

"If we're regularly holding press conferences and calling administrators to task," Driver said, "we will be the people putting the EM and his minions on the defensive instead of being on the defensive ourselves."

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS TO THE DFT

Fellow educators,

I have called us together for this meeting to address what I believe is the most urgent crisis in the history of our union and our public school system. Today, I hope to initiate a plan of action to confront that crisis, and I ask for your support in facing the monumental challenges in front of us. While our politicians are delivering speeches on the state of our nation, I wish to deliver an address on the state of our own union, and to tell the truth that our politicians will not admit.

President's Report



**Steve
Conn**

Our lives as teachers are built upon our commitment to the young people of Detroit. We all embarked upon that commitment knowing that we would face great difficulties, but also believing in the possibility that our hard work could make a difference. Some of us are old survivors who chose to endure the many years of hardships. Others are new to the district, and have been tested from the very beginning by what are now some of the most degraded school conditions in the nation. All of us, young and old, live under the constant threat that our jobs could be the next to disappear and that our students could be further deprived of the few resources they have left. Many are here today seeking answers to what can be done.

My pledge to you today is not that we will find every answer or sweep aside all obstacles at once, but that we will begin a collective fight for our students and our schools—a fight to save public education, to save our union, and to realize the promise of hope and progress that our city truly deserves. I believe that our strength and our potential extend far beyond

our own numbers, because the struggle for our union is united with the needs of our students and community. As I have said before, I will say again: the struggle for our union is, and must be, a civil rights struggle for the people of Detroit. We will not march alone.

In the week since my election as DFT president, I have made regular visits to schools and talked with many teachers about where we go from here. It was a pleasure to be greeted by the enthusiasm and smiles of old friends and new, and all of the teachers I met raised their own concerns and demands. Class size, job security, frozen pay, principal harassment, special education resources and ancillary services were regular topics. And although the challenges required to confront these issues are immense, there is clearly an awakening sentiment that something can be done. With your active leadership and support, yes, something will be done.

We find ourselves in the vortex of a national attack on public education. From Lansing to the White House, all of the nation's leading policy makers advocate cutting resources from the public schools and diverting the funds towards charter school experiments. But the charter mania among the elite has not been shared by the rest of the population—out of the 49 million students attending schools that receive public funds, 96 percent continue to attend traditional public schools; only 4 percent attend charters. In fact, in the few places where charter schools have become widespread, their introduction was foisted against the will of the local population. In places like Detroit and Oakland, the outright state takeover of the district was necessary in order to impose the new system.

The results have been catastrophic: in every charter-imposed district, the resource deficits have decimated the public schools, while the charters have underperformed their public counterparts in spite of every rigged financial advantage. Instead of benefitting from the supposed “market competition” between public and charter, the real outcome has been to lower the quality of education across the

board. Teachers' unions—which had been the traditional line of defense for public education—largely capitulated in the face of the attacks, causing membership numbers and morale to plummet. The advocates for greater resources for our most impoverished public schools are now mocked as “waiting for Superman”—we are told to accept the corporate schemes of Lex Luthor, instead.

This social experiment has long since failed in Detroit and in numerous other highly segregated, majority-black and Latino districts, and is now perpetuated only on the basis of completely circular arguments. They say that the takeover is needed to balance the budget, but when the takeover only makes financial matters worse, they say that this makes it necessary to continue the takeover. They say that the takeover is needed to improve academic performance, but when the takeover diminishes academic performance, they insist on applying the same bad remedy: more takeover. They say that charters are needed to innovate education, but when the charters only exacerbate the crisis of education, they say that this crisis necessitates the creation of more charters. They say that school closings and layoffs are necessary to eliminate the deficit, but when these policies force thousands of students to leave the district along with their per-pupil funding, we are then told that this requires even more school closings and more

THE DETROIT teacher

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layoffs. For over 15 years, we have weathered this continuous cycle of destruction. There is a common saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results—we are living in a cyclone of insanity.

Our union can and must stand against this destructive cycle; the human cost is too high a price for our society to afford. In every segregated school district where educational opportunities have crumbled, the claimed reduction in government spending has in fact been completely offset by the collateral expenses of social decay. In place of the obligation to invest in the futures of our young people, we have witnessed instead the counterposed investment in an increasingly militarized police force and a titanic prison industry. We have witnessed the proliferation of urban blight and unemployment. In places like Ferguson, Missouri, we have witnessed new urban uprisings, echoing the same social discontent that led to the Detroit upheaval in 1967 and many disturbances across the nation. Authorities tell us that we are too poor to invest in quality educational conditions; the reality is that we can't afford not to invest in the futures of our young people. Never again can we afford to accept the argument that there is not enough money. Either the nation will invest in teachers and text books, or it will pay a terrible price for urban warfare and destruction. Let us be a united voice for hope and progress.

Because we are educators, we also care deeply about the philosophy of the education system in which we work. We are practitioners of pedagogical theory, and earned our positions through careful study of the accumulated methods for facilitating learning. We cannot ignore the fact that the governing philosophy being imposed on our district is not based in any tested educational method, but instead derives from crude economics. The current regime is almost entirely based on the privatized, cheap and narrow schemes of the conservative economist Milton Friedman, rather than the proven science of traditional pedagogy. The cheap and narrow focus is not only a theory for reducing government spending, but it is also a theory about the position in society for which our students are being trained.

The current regime in Detroit has stripped from the schools nearly all humanities, creative arts and music programs—the hallmarks of a liberal arts education. In their place, technical and vocational training have taken priority. The theory of the regime has

been to guide the hopes of students away from the attainment of a top university education, instead fixing their career paths towards lower-paying, less-educated sectors of the workforce. Even the prescribed teaching schemes cater to these backwards priorities, replacing creativity and critical thinking with rote memorization and scripted test preparation. In the EAA schools, many students barely receive any education at all—they spend all day in front of a computer screen, following mindless instructions like robots. Soaring class size also transforms schools into sweatshops, diverting attention away from learning and squandering time and energy on the taxing maintenance of discipline and order.

History teachers should recognize this regressive shift in priority as an extension of the philosophy of Booker T. Washington. Over 100 years ago, Washington argued that the pursuit of full equality in black education had been an error. “It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top,” he said. His pragmatist theory governed the Tuskegee education machine in the South, training young black men to enter only those occupations which were acceptable to the old Jim Crow system. Many thousands of black Americans fled the South, migrating to Northern cities like Detroit in search of better jobs and education. This was the origin of the black community that still resides in Detroit to this day. But now, in the face of a national wave of attacks on education, there is no North to which our community can escape. With our backs to the wall, our only choice today is to stand and fight.

If our community is to thrive, this will require restoring the promise of equal, quality education and Martin Luther King's dream of an integrated America. Education is the cornerstone of a democratic society. Education is the litmus test for the democratic principle of equal opportunity. Education ought to be a sacred obligation to the future of our young people, and not a tool for private profit for the benefit of today's robber barons. Our role is not simply to prepare our students

for a career, but to enable our students to exercise their freedom and to pursue their happiness as equal, educated citizens. In order to fulfill that role, we must be better organized together to defend our students and ourselves.

I intend to rebuild our union from top to bottom. Among my first initiatives as your president, I will immediately begin the re-

cruitment and training of building representatives at every school where there is a vacancy. I will work to ensure that teacher grievances receive effective responses, and I will commit the weight of union leadership to defend our representatives against all forms of principal harassment and subversion. Under my presidency, teacher grievances will no longer be swept under the rug; they will take priority and go to arbitration. Although our contract is weak, we can do much more to enforce its provisions that can offer some relief to our members. Building representatives will be trained to conduct grievance campaigns and rebuild teacher leadership in every building. Achieving smaller class size is absolutely critical—so many teachers labor under truly flagrant excesses, and this problem compromises teaching and learning throughout the district. The subjective and capricious evaluation system must also be challenged. Teachers must receive their evaluation results and fall teaching assignments before the end of the school year in June, with appeals to be heard immediately afterwards. I pledge to restore monthly meetings for our members, and to restore our union office as a professional and functioning resource. I further intend to build organizing campaigns to bring the EAA and charter school teachers into the DFT, rebuilding our numbers and repairing the fragmented state of education. I intend to rebuild our active capacity such that, in the event that our members wish to use our most powerful weapon—the strike—we will be in a strong enough position to win.

At all times, I will maintain an unwavering connection to our students and community members, as well as to fellow union activists across the nation. It is my hope that we can serve as a national model for the defense of public education, inspiring teachers everywhere of the possibility to stand up for our schools.

Today is a new beginning for the Detroit Federation of Teachers. At a time when the very existence of our union is at stake, today is also the most important turning point in our union history. We face a difficult road ahead. I hope that today we can begin discussing and voting on a program of demands, and that our members can now thrive as active participants and leaders in a democratic decision-making process. I accept your mandate to lead this union to fight for the quality learning conditions that our students and teachers deserve. But I cannot succeed without your help. Join this fight, and together we can strive for the brightest future for the city we love.

Thank You for Your Vote

By Ivy Bailey, DFT Executive Vice President

As the recently elected executive vice president of the DFT, I want to thank you, the members, for your vote of confidence in me. I worked hard to win your confidence, not just during the last few months, but during 16 years of union activity.

As you may know, I was the chairperson for the Open Forum held at Frederick Douglass, with more than 400 members, parents and legislators to mobilize the union in 2008. I assisted in brokering the deal that brought the Obama Campaign Headquarters to our old building to provide additional income for the DFT.



Ivy Bailey

I was the lead consultant for the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program that was designed to create a professional culture committed to instructional improvement. I organized the "Saturday DPS Open Warehouse" project in 2012. For the last eight years I have served as an AFT Michigan vice president. I also served on the MPSERS (state retirement board) for 15 years. I now will have to regretfully resign this position to devote all my time to DFT members.

Now I want to pour all this expertise into representing you and becoming a member-driven union. We have 4,000 members and each one of us must find a way to be involved. One thing you can do is attend the 4:30 p.m. membership meetings on the second Thursday of each month at the IBEW hall. It's important to come to these meetings because decisions are made that affect your job security.

Here is what I am committing to as your executive vice president:

- Putting members' needs first.
- Restoring trust in our union.
- Mobilizing and organizing the membership.
- Restoring the power that made us the mighty DFT.
- Improving communications between members and administrators and the community.

My focus will be on improving the union's customer service, communication, and member education. I know many of you feel like you've been abandoned. But that's not the case. Working under an emergency manager with constant opposition from legislators in Lansing has not been easy for our union.

But my thoughts on these difficult challenges are summarized best by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protests to denigrate into physical violence."

Updates . . .

Retiree Chapter Meetings Have Moved

The DFT Retiree Chapter meetings have moved. The retirees no longer meet at Triumph Church on East Grand Boulevard.

They now meet at the Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen Rd., Lathrup Village, 48076. Also, instead of meeting on the third Tuesday of each month, they meet on the SECOND Tuesday of the month.

DFT Scholarship Fund Accepts Donations

The DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund has reached "Cornerstone Society" status within the Anthony Wayne Society at Wayne State University. The honor goes to organizations that have reached the threshold of \$50,000 of giving toward the institution and its students.

"This is made possible by the generosity and support of DFT members," said Paula Trilety, treasurer of the DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund. "Honoring or memorializing a colleague with a donation to the DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund is a special way to show you care."

Last year's scholarship recipient was Lia Heath-Day.

Donations can be made to the DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund and sent to the DFT, attention Paula Trilety, at 7700 Second Ave., Suite 427, Detroit, MI 48202.

Summer Workshops

A series of National Endowment for the Humanities summer workshops are offered to teachers (with stipends) at www.neh.gov.

Gilder Lehrman (www.gilderlehrman.org) also offers workshops. There is no cost to teachers but stipends are smaller.

The Problem of the Color Line: Atlanta Landmarks and Civil Rights History

National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks of American History and Culture is offering workshops for teachers.

- July 19-24, 2015 or July 26-31, 2015
- Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia

We are excited to announce two one-week workshops for teachers, who are selected as NEH Summer Scholars. While participating in our workshop in Atlanta, the Summer Scholars will visit the sites where civil rights history was made. We have assembled a group of nationally known scholars who will share stories of the Civil Rights Movement that reshaped the city, the region, and the nation. Summer Scholars will learn how to use Atlanta's historic sites to bring the Civil Rights Movement alive to their students.

A \$1,200 stipend will be paid to program participants to defray cost of books, travel, and lodging. For information, contact Tim Crimmins, Department of Sociology, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30302-5020, phone 404-413-6356, email TCRIMMIN@GSU.EDU. To apply, go to: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwnms/initiatives/AtlantaLandmarks.pdf>

IT'S COUNT DAY

"And a one, and a two, and a three!"

By Marva Fletcher

The iconic Sesame Street character, Count Dracula, was able to make counting fun by saying it with a contagious rhythm. This made him one of the most recognized characters from the show. Our own Pete Roe decided to dress up as the Count in the spirit of Count Day on Feb. 11, putting his kid-at-heart personality on full display.

The Count and Roe, a teacher at the Adult Education Center West Campus, have something in common; they are exceptional at mathematics. Roe also has extensive knowledge in Computer Science, making him a very skilled instructor. Thanks to his instruction and leadership, an impressive number of pre-GED and GED graduates have succeeded academically.

Roe's exceptional knowledge isn't the only thing he is known for. When he isn't educating students, he's honing his skills in magic. As a magician, he performs tricks and illusions for his peers and colleagues. This helped him build a healthy working relationship at his work place, making work fun for himself or others.

Roe won a well deserved Employee of the Month honor for the month of November. He accepted the honors with great humility and appreciation that his efforts were recognized. Go, Go, Mr. Roe!





Preschoolers Venture to the Fox

Preschool students from A.L. Holmes School visited the Fox Theater on Jan. 29 to see the Sesame Street gang perform "Make a New Friend." The children enjoyed the show and even got to shake hands and hug a couple of the Sesame Street characters. This fun adventure was planned by teachers Theresa Boyce (left), Kathy Willey and assistant Rita Beale (right).



THE DETROIT NEWSM

Keidan Rocks Out for

Steve Jackson was geeked to perform the Four Tops tune "I Can't Stop Loving You" on Feb. 26. The 14-year-old student at Keidan Special Education Center used a wheelchair to the center of the cafeteria, and sang out, assisted by Susan Gregory.

Gregory, a 25-year DPS teacher, organized a tribute to Motown History Month. Students performed songs ranging from "Midnight Train" by Gladys Knight and the Pips and Stevie Wonder's "You are the Sunshine of My Life," Aretha Franklin's "Chain of Fools" and tunes from the Supremes.

Donise Floyd, Academic Engagement Officer at Keidan, honored Gregory and the staff for going all out for the program — several staff members dressed in formal wear to re-enact glamorous performers from the 60s and 70s Hitsville USA.

"You are the hardest working people in this district," Floyd said, praising both the staff and the students.

Keidan is known for its special events surrounding holidays and important dates. The tribute to Motown was perhaps the most fun and uplifting to date.



Can You Spell Pusillanimous?

Students at Carver S.T.E.M. Academy participated in a spelling bee on Feb. 13, where they squared off to see who was the school's best speller. Many schools participated in this district-wide contest. Tricia Barnes, an instructional specialist at Carver, organized the event, which challenged students and gave them a renewed appreciation for the often complex structure of words.



Henderson Acad

The staff at Henderson Academy wore red on Feb. 6 to celebrate Wear Red Day. The day promotes togetherness and raises awareness for HIV/AIDS.



From left are Henderson staff members Keith Pitts, Robin Brooks, Joy Burk-Thompson, Robin Jackson, and Angela...

DETROIT MAKERS

For Black History Month

"I Can't Help Myself" on
Center rolled up in his
by music therapist

own in honor of Black
night Train to Georgia"
the Sunshine of my
Supremes.



**Music therapist
Susan Gregory
with student
Steve Jackson**

Academy Goes Red

6 to celebrate the American Heart Association's National
d raises awareness about heart health.



**Roslyn Lile, Aletha Jones-Leonard, Andella White, Alexis
Angela Cotton.**



Sisterhood of the Travelling Snow Pants

Early this winter, Detroit preschool teacher Ann Turner mused on Facebook how wonderful it would be if she could get a set of snowpants for each of her students so they could enjoy the snow.

Thus a campaign was born that overwhelmed her and even got the attention of the Education Week blog "Teachers in a Strange Land."

"An off-the-cuff comment I made on Facebook turned into a major snow project with people all over the metro area donating winter gear for my students to wear," Turner said.

Snowpants, coats, gloves and hats poured in. Turner soon had a complete set for each of her 17 students.

"My friend bought 10 pairs of new boots from Kmart," said Turner, a teacher at Palmer Park Academy. Turner started the collection by donating her two daughters' outgrown snow pants.



Because her students didn't have snow gear, they never got to enjoy the snow.

"I think we can make a snowman today," a 4-year-old said, darting outside.

Once Turner opens her door to the snowy outdoors, the kids take off, some hoping to use her two saucer sleds. Others just wanted to walk in the brisk air through the crunchy snow.

Timeline for Retirement

By Patrick Falcusan
DFT Retirement Counselor

This is the time of the year when many DFT members begin giving serious thought to retirement. Following is a timeline to help members through the retirement process.

1. In order to retire July 1 or Aug. 1, you must meet certain criteria (see box).



Patrick Falcusan

2. In order to retire, you need to determine if your pension (and Social Security if eligible) will provide you with enough income. Go to your miAccount (michigan.gov/orsschools), calculate what your pension would be and compare that to your bring home pay now. (If you are eligible for Social Security, check with Social Security to see how much that would be).

3. In early April, submit your retirement application to the State (michigan.gov/orsschools). If you are 65, or older, you need to apply for Medicare parts A and B if you have not already done so (see box).

4. In early April (if you have not already done so), turn in your irrevocable Separation from Service (SFS) form to the District. Go to HR (10th floor Fisher Building) ask for two SFS forms, fill them both out (putting July 1, 2015 or Aug. 1, 2015 as your retirement date), check the box that says "retiring," get both SFS forms date-stamped, and take one SFS form with you for your records. (In order to be paid for your sick days, you must turn in your SFS form by May 1 and retire either July 1 or Aug. 1, 2015).

5. In early April, if you have a TDP (buying time through payroll deduction) and wish to apply any of your lump sum payout money from the District (TIP, sick days, last four pays [if on 26 pays] etc.) toward your TDP, call me at 313-875-6783.

6. In early May, contact your TSA agent if you wish to shelter any of your lump sum payout money from the District (TIP, sick days, last four pays, [if on 26 pays] etc.).

7. If you retire July 1 and follow the instructions above, you

should expect to get:

- Your new insurance card from the state in June.
- One last pay from DPS in early July.
- Your first pension payment on July 25.
- Your lump sum payout money (TIP, sick days, last four pays [if on 26 pays] etc.) in August.

Who is Eligible to Retire?

- If you have Basic and are under age 60, you must be at least 55 and have 30 years of service in order to get an unreduced pension.

- If you have MIP and are under age 60, you must be at least 46 and have at least 30 years of service in order to get an unreduced pension.

- If you are at least 55 but less than 60, you are eligible for an early reduced pension if you have 15 years but less than 30 years of service and have worked at least 17 days during each of the previous five school years.

- If you are over 60, you are eligible for a pension if you have 10 years or more of service (Basic) or 5 years or more of service (MIP).

- If you are over 55 but under 60 with more than 15 years but less than 30 years of service credit, you may decide to retire by July 1 to preserve your right to health care along with your early reduced pension.

- If you are over 55 with 10 actual years worked, you might be able to buy five years to get you to the 15-year threshold.

- If you are under age 55 and have more than 10 years of service, you are vested with the state retirement system and would be eligible for a pension at age 60 even if you never returned to teaching in a public school that was part of the pension system. The pension would be based on your years worked.

- If you leave DPS and you have less than 10 years of service and are not vested, you could get a refund of your MIP contributions or leave your MIP contributions with the state in case you took employment with another public school in Michigan that was part of the retirement system. Your years in Detroit would then count toward the 10 years you needed in order to get vested.

After You Retire

Several questions always pop up when folks retire: What happens to my health care? When does the payment for TIP come? When does my pension start, etc.? Below are many of the answers.

Q: What happens to my health care?

A: Your District insurance will stop the last day of the month

you retire (June 30 for those retiring July 1). Your new retirement insurance will start the first day of the month you retire (July 1 for those retiring July 1).

Q: What happens to my pay?

A: For those retiring July 1, one more regular check will come in July (both for 22 pays and 26 pays).

Q: I have 26 pays and retired July 1. What happens to the four checks that normally come in the summer?

A: Those four checks will come along with other monies owed you in one big final check.

Q: When will I get my final check for TIP monies, sick days, last four checks, etc.?

A: In most cases, the final payment will come in mid to late August for folks retiring July 1. If you are sheltering or buying time with any of this money, you must have notified the district ahead of time.

Q: When will my pension begin?

A: For most folks retiring July 1 the first pension payment will come July 25.

Q: Can I work after I retire?

A: You cannot work for a school district that is part of the retirement system for one month after you retire.

Q: If I get a job after I retire, will I have a limit on how much I can earn?

A: New rules about working after retirement became effective July 1, 2010.

1. If you work for a school district that is part of the state retirement system and you become an employee of that school district and are paid directly by that school district, you will have an earnings cap of one-third of your final salary average — \$20,000-\$24,000 for most folks.

2. If you work for a school district that participates in the retirement system but that district uses a third party to pay your wages, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from the third party.

3. If you become a consultant for a school district that participates in the retirement system and are paid as a consultant and not an employee, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from that district.

4. If you work somewhere that is not a participating employer or a private school, in private industry or a public school in another state beside Michigan, you can earn as much as you want.

Q: Will collecting Social Security impact how much I can earn?

A: Yes, between 62 and 66 (or your full Social Security age) there is a Social Security annual limit of approximately

\$15,000 on how much can be earned without impacting your Social Security. After 66 (or your full Social Security age), Social Security does not have an earnings cap. The pension system's earnings cap will remain in place the rest of your life.

Applying for Medicare

If you or your spouse are over 65 when you retire and want health care through the retirement system, you will need Medicare parts A and B. Almost all members over 65 already have Medicare part A but not part B. Here is what you need to do to have part B in place by the time you retire.

- On your retirement insurance form, put the date from your Medicare card when Medicare part A started. Put your retirement date for the date Medicare part B started. (If you don't yet have part A, also put your retirement date for when part A started).

- Three months before you retire, go to Social Security and notify them of your retirement date and tell them you want your Medicare part B to be effective the same day as your retirement date (and part A if you don't already have part A).

- If Social Security gives you a Medicare form to be filled out by your employer (they almost always do), take that form to the 10th floor of the Fisher Building (Human Resources). (Make an extra copy of the form in case the first copy gets lost and you have to repeat this process).

- Submit the form from Social Security to the District along with a copy of your Separation from Service form. If this is the first time you have submitted your Separation from Service form, submit two copies, get them date-stamped and take one copy with you for your records.

- The District will fill out your form from Social Security and return it to you. (Usually you will have to leave the form and come back later to pick it up).

- Take the completed form back to Social Security. (Make a copy for your records).

We're on
Facebook!
check us out at

www.facebook.com/DFT231

Questions Regarding W2 Forms

Each year questions are asked about what seem to be discrepancies on members' W2s--specifically the amount shown in Box 1 (Wages) being too low.

The amount shown in Box 1 only reflects wages that are subject to federal, state and city taxes. Some wages are not

subject to taxes and are not shown. Such items as TSAs, TDPs, MIP, Basic 4, Pension Plus, Section 125s, healthcare premiums etc. are not subject to taxes.

If a member made \$65,000, but put \$10,000 annually into her TSA, then Box 1 would only show \$55,000 in taxable wages. If another member made

\$65,000, but put a combined \$25,000 annually toward a TSA, TDP, MIP and healthcare premiums, then Box 1 would only show \$40,000.

Box 3 (Social Security Wages) is a better indicator of wages earned during a calendar year. But, even Box 3 does not always indicate all wages earned since healthcare premiums and Section 125s are not subject to Social Security taxes. If a member made \$65,000, but paid \$2,000 in healthcare premiums and put \$1,000 into a section 125, then Box 3 would only show \$62,000.

For pension purposes, if a person made \$65,000, the entire \$65,000 is reported to the Michigan retirement system. Members can verify this by accessing their miAccount with the retirement system.

Also, remember that the wages shown on a member's W2 reflect the wages for a calendar year (January 1 to December 31) while the wages shown on a member's miAccount reflect the wages for a school year (July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the next calendar year).

Patrick Falcusan,
DFT Financial Analyst

For The Teachers, By The Teachers First Annual Teachers Appreciation Gala

"For the Teachers, By the Teachers" is a newly formed entity, composed of DPS teachers, which will celebrate the contributions of All Detroit Public School educators via our First Annual Teachers Gala. The purpose of this Gala is to celebrate those of us who have made the commitment to educate the children of Detroit.

Committees are formed and pledges of support are being made. It is imperative that a moment in time is taken to say "Thank You" to the teachers of Detroit Public Schools for our dedication and commitment to the children of our great city. If you wish to join this pivotal effort, please make immediate contact to join a committee, recommend a sponsor or simply state your interest in attending this event.

TENTATIVE EVENT DETAILS

When: Saturday, June 13, 2015

Time: 8 p.m.- 12 a.m.

Where: Doubletree by Hilton Hotel ~ Detroit – Dearborn

*IF INTERESTED,
PLEASE SEE THE CONTACT
INFORMATION BELOW:*

For The Teachers, By The Teachers

P. O. Box 5144 Detroit, MI 48205

Phone: (313)884-4364/ (248)635-6802

Email: fortheteachers@outlook.com

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4TEACHERSBYTEACHERS

Come Together DFT

By **Dominic Bailey**
Clippert Academy

While I sat at my desk this morning, I realized how much sleep I lost the night before. You see the Sunday before I attended a mandatory mass membership meeting that elicited rousing applause from the crowd, for the proposed resolutions brought forth by our union president.

It was wonderful to see a room full of strong DFT members united in the common goal of strengthening our union, discussing our issues, and focusing on making this district work for our children. However sleep didn't come easy due to the results of that meeting.

Upon the start of the meeting it was obvious that our elected executive board and the president were at odds and it was proven as the meeting went on. We, as a union fighting for our lives, cannot waste time with our own agendas. Each officer the membership elected for this administration, has the survivability and livelihood of 4,000 plus members in their hands.

We need them to be in lockstep. We need them to be able to articulate our concerns, negotiate our contracts in good faith, and grow this membership so that we can be effective as we once were. We need honest engagement with true community leaders who can assist us in our cause. Any other agenda than for which they were elected

needs to be curtailed by the membership or the officers themselves.

In 2016 we negotiate a contract in a state in which right-to-work laws have prevailed. A state where legislation has passed that penalizes teachers for work stoppages with fines and denial of certifications up to three years or permanently. A state where an emergency manager can decide not to negotiate, it's his or her choice.

We need an agenda that is realistic, achievable, and will continue to move our union forward. Time is of the essence. We've all suffered under emergency management and some more than others.

Our children who come to us every day have probably suffered the most. The ones who we give coats to in winter because they don't have one, or the students we buy extra uniforms for because we notice the same shirt or pants. The parents that we make sure get on the Thanksgiving Day basket list, because the father is laid off.

We, the members of the mighty DFT, need to allow compassion to enter our hearts as we deal with each other, negotiate with our district leaders in good faith, and understand that it is all about that young child who comes through your doors every morning. We cannot fix all our ills at one time, but we can all come together and let this community know that their needs are our needs as well.

Membership Meeting Attendance

School representatives who were in attendance for the months of January and February 2015 are listed below.

JANUARY 2015

Academy of Americas
Adult Education
Ann Arbor Trail
Brewer
Brown, Ronald Academy
Carver
Charles Drew
Clippert
Cody DIT
Cooke
Davis Aerospace
Davison
Dixon
Duke Ellington
Durfee
East English Village Prep
Edison

Emerson
Holmes, A.L.
Hutchinson K-8
King, J. R.
Mackenzie Elementary
Mann
Marquette
Marcus Garvey
Marshall, Thurgood
Mason
Moses Field
Noble
Osborn Evergreen
Robeson Malcolm X
Sampson
Schulze Academy
Spain School
Thirkell

Wayne Elementary
Western
White, Jerry L.

FEBRUARY 2015

Academy of Americas
Ann Arbor Trail
Attendance-Northeast
Center
Bates Academy
Brewer
Brown, Ronald Academy
Carleton Elementary
Carver
Cass Tech
Clark
Clemente Roberto,

Clinical Prevention/
Intervention
Clippert
Cody APL
Cody DIT
Cody MCH
Cooke
Davis Aerospace
Davison
Detroit Collegiate Prep @
Northwestern
Detroit International
Academy
Dixon
Charles Drew
Douglass
Durfee
Earhart

East English Village Prep
Edison
Ellington, Duke
Emerson
Fisher Lower
FLICS
Gardner Elementary
Garvey, Marcus
Gompers
Hutchinson K-8
Keidan
King, J. R.
King, M. L. High
Ludington
Mackenzie Elementary
Mann
Marshall, Thurgood
Marquette

Mason
Moses Field
Nichols
Osborn Evergreen
Randolph Tech
Renaissance
Robeson Malcolm X
Sampson
Schulze
Speech Pathologists Dept.
Thirkell
Vernor
Wayne Elementary
Western
Wright Academy

Final Checks Paid in Leslee Jones Arbitration

Prior to the 2004-2005 school year, the district laid off many teachers who were then hired back as substitutes. Although they were paid as substitutes, many were assigned the duties of a full-time teacher. Some were doing the same job in the same classroom that they were in prior to the layoff.

The union maintained that the teachers in question (one of whom was Leslee Jones) were owed the difference between their regular pay, and the lower pay they had received as substitutes. The union filed a class-action grievance and ultimately won a series of arbitration decisions.

After the last decision in 2008, the district paid dozens of claims. In 2009, there were still 74 unresolved claims. During the last six years, about half of the claimants were found to be ineligible, because they did not meet the requirements as laid out in the arbitration awards. Most of the other teachers were paid from 2010 to 2013.

For the last two years, the DFT has been trying to resolve the remaining five claims. The district maintained that the individuals were not eligible, because they could not find records to verify that the teachers were in fact serving as teachers, not substitutes.

The DFT, however, did not relent, and on Jan. 19, DFT President Keith Johnson signed off on a settlement and payment of the last five claims.

Mark O'Keefe worked on the case for six years as executive vice president and then controller. A few years ago, O'Keefe said, "When the building is sold and the Leslee Jones case is settled, my work here will be done." The case was settled on his last day at the DFT.



Lee Johnson, one of the last five teachers paid in the Leslee Jones arbitration, receives his check from DFT Executive Vice President Ivy Bailey.

CALENDAR

All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

March

- ~5 **DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 10 **Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.,**
Michigan First Credit Union, 27000
Evergreen, Lathrup Village
- 12 **General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott)

April

- 3-10 **Schools closed, Spring Break**
- 13 **DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m. DFT**
Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 14 **Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Michigan**
First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen,
Lathrup Village
- 16 **General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m. (IBEW**
Hall, 1358 Abbott)

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